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FRANCE/TAIWAN/PRC: FRIGATE DEAL APPROVED

The French foreign ministry on September 27 announced the government has authorized a French firm to undertake negotiations with Taiwan for the sale of unarmed frigate hulls, according to Embassy Paris. The communiqué claimed the frigate deal was purely a commercial affair, reaffirmed French interest in developing friendly relations with the PRC, and stated that France had taken PRC security concerns into account.

Comment: The long-anticipated French government approval for the sale of six Lafayette-class frigates—worth \$2 billion—is the last major hurdle to consummating the deal. The Taiwan press reported that the Chinese Shipbuilding Corporation signed an agreement for the frigates with the Thompson Corporation of France on August 31.

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